

**REGENERATIVE  
AGRICULTURE**  
AND FOOD SYSTEMS SERIES



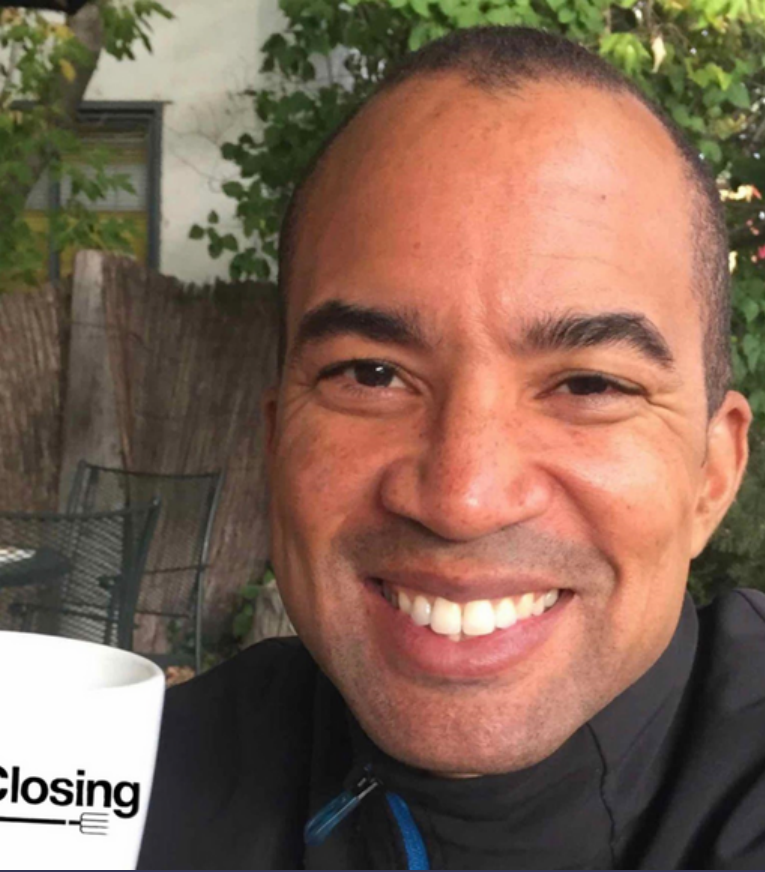
# INTERNATIONAL COMPOSTING WEEK WITH LOOP CLOSING

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## WHY IS RECYCLING FOOD SCRAPS IMPORTANT FOR REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE?

Growing and harvesting food extracts from the soil, depleting it unless we close the ecological loop to regenerate our soil.

**RECYCLING OUR FOOD SCRAPS INTO COMPOST PROVIDES ONE OF THE BEST “FOODS” FOR FEEDING AND REGENERATING OUR SOILS AND COMMUNITIES, BOTH URBAN AND RURAL.**

## WHAT IS THE STATUS OF RECYCLING FOOD SCRAPS IN THE US?

Despite decades of effort, investments, and zero-waste plans and goals, the US EPA reports 94% of US food scraps are not recycled, making it one of the single

largest drivers of GHGe, driving climate extremes. We have been hyper-focused on centralized systems with large industrial facilities and hauling as the solution. The industry leaders explain that barriers of costs (land, hauling, and environmental compliance) and restrictions (zoning, permitting, and neighbor resistance) have blocked bringing online the needed capacity. And bringing online more of these centralized systems further exacerbates the structural inequities the pandemic has laid bare because they are historically and disproportionately placed in underrepresented and less affluent communities, too often communities of color.

## CAN ANYTHING BE DONE TO PROVIDE THE NEEDED CAPACITY WHILE ALSO ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL AND EQUITY ISSUES?

Yes, we can learn lessons from other industries that expanded capacity by applying a decentralized and distributed approach. Fifty years ago, we started with mainframe computers and later drastically increased computing capacity by adding personal computers, distributing them in every room in every office and in home.

The mainframe computer equivalent for food scraps recycling is the centralized systems with which we started. We now have the opportunity to drastically increase composting capacity by distributing decentralized composting approaches such as on-farm, community composting, at home and backyard, and on-site at businesses where the food waste is generated. At Loop Closing, we see placing composting machines where dumpsters now stand would be like



placing personal computers in every office room and provide a path for drastically increasing composting capacity.

## HOW CAN PLACING A COMPOSTING MACHINE AT A COMMERCIAL FOOD WASTE GENERATOR PROVIDE THE NEEDED COMPOSTING CAPACITY, HELP REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE, AND ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC, AND EQUITY ISSUES?

For an example of composting capacity, if we place one sofa or car-size composting machine at just one commercial food waste generator on each block in Washington, DC, then we would have the capacity to compost all of DC's food waste, one and a half times.

Using what DC organizations would no longer spend on my hauling away their food scraps, an investment in composting machines would result in a 4-year payback period on the initial capital cost, and this also supports a compost technician position for every 18 locations, at a salary and operating cost of \$165,000 per person, for a total of 200 local living-wage jobs.



When scaled, food delivery vehicles that, once returned empty, could then bring the compost back to farms (either directly or via distribution centers) to close the ecological loop in their food shed, implementing circular behavior that's both regenerative and inclusive.

In the long run, businesses and governments would save money. We build fewer centralized systems and have less hauling, reducing the harm inflicted on underrepresented communities. Loop Closing provides on-ramps for community members to access these green, forward-facing jobs for self-agency.

**WE GO FROM HAUL AND HARM TO HEAL AND HIRE.**

## HOW IS ON-SITE COMPOSTING RELATED TO REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE AND A BETTER FOOD SYSTEM?

We need a solution for food scraps recycling in urban areas because they concentrate in urban areas where 80% of the US population currently lives per the latest census. Such a solution provides a tremendous opportunity for regenerative agriculture for farmers.

**SMALLER SYSTEMS IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE FINISHED COMPOST, PREVENTING US FROM REPEATING THE COLLAPSE OF THE RECYCLING MARKET**

in the composting market because of product quality problems from contamination. Smaller systems with a higher quality product, opens markets, increase returns & opportunities and provide resilience.

## WHAT'S NEEDED FROM DECISION AND POLICYMAKERS?

Level the playing field. Currently, the US federal government is spending billions of dollars and state and local governments as much as hundreds of millions of dollars subsidizing centralized food waste disposal and recycling systems with grants, infrastructure support, tax incentives, and more. Meanwhile, they spend maybe 1% of that, if anything, supporting local, decentralized solutions, as discussed above. And the distributed systems demonstrate great potential for overcoming the barriers preventing us from meeting the needed capacity to recycle our food scraps. Instead of cutting funds from centralized systems, we advocate providing similar funding for decentralized approaches, as we need all hands on deck to solve this nasty problem of our age of food waste mismanagement. No one solution will be the cure-all, we'll need a variety of solutions, just like we do with other industries like computing capacity and power generation.

**“THESE SMALL-SIZE SYSTEMS PROVIDE A FEASIBLE PATH TO LARGE-SCALE DIVERSION THAT CAN ALSO BE CIRCULAR, LOCAL, BETTER CARBON LIFE-CYCLE MANAGING, INCLUSIVE, AND REGENERATIVE.”**

## ABOUT JEFFREY NEAL

Jeffrey Neal is CEO of Loop Closing, a composting service provider for commercial food scraps helping clients meet their sustainability goals and live their values regarding the environment, economics, and equity. Before founding Loop Closing, Jeffrey served a 24-year career in the US Navy as a Civil Engineer Corps Officer, solving our most complex operations and facilities problems at Navy and Marine Corps bases worldwide.

## LOOP CLOSING

Loop Closing places commercially available composting machines where dumpsters once stood providing a path to zero waste. Instead of hauling food waste “away,” we compost it on-site, where it’s generated, thereby elevating the use of food from heading to landfill. Our innovation is deploying a decentralized network that inclusively regenerates our soils, communities, and planet. Similar to distributing personal computers scaling computing capacity far beyond mainframe computers, Loop Closing’s aim of distributing on-site composting can scale composting capacity beyond centralized recycling infrastructure. The US is stuck at a recycling rate of 6% without a path to meet ReFED goals of 23% by 2030. Loop Closing’s decentralized approach provides a path to meet and exceed the ReFED goal.

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